

MINUTES

TALBOT COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

7 July 2014

I. ROLL CALL

The regular monthly meeting of the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission was called to order at 3:00 PM on Monday, 7 July 2014. Those members in attendance were Mr. Ward Bucher, Chair; Mrs. Marsha Kacher, Mrs. Dorothy C. Fenwick, Mr. Ron Mitchell and Mr. Robert Amdur. Mr. Jacob Laureska has resigned as of 1 July 2014, and therefore was not present. Representing the County were Mr. Martin Sokolich and Ms. Florence Ball.

II. CURRENT BUSINESS

- A. REVIEW MINUTES OF THE 2 JUNE 2014 MEETING – The minutes of the last meeting were read. A motion was made by Mrs. Marsha Kacher to approve the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ron Mitchell and unanimously carried.
- B. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 5 JUNE 2014 COMMISSIONER WORKSHOP IN CAMBRIDGE – Mrs. Marsha Kacher reported on the workshop called “Connecting With Your Community” which she attended on 5 June 2014 in Cambridge. She said there were also other workshops available such as a design workshop and a legal workshop. She received a notebook with architectural designs that could be helpful in identifying historical details and determining the dates of historic structures. The instructor was Karen Brown who resides in Annapolis and serves on their historic commission. Approximately 12 commissioners from various areas and an archaeologist from Calvert County attended the event.

Mrs. Kacher said she and TCHPC were already aware of a great deal of the information discussed; however, she made note of strategies that might help our Commission. She shared some of the strategies suggested, such as improving communication with contractors, the community, architects, public officials; disclosure of historic status of properties at closing, distribution of informative brochures, the use of plaques to identify the historic significance of structures, offering guided tours of historic properties, and award programs for outstanding restoration or maintenance of a historic property. Mrs. Dorothy Fenwick interjected that it would be most beneficial if Talbot County had a disclosure requirement for closings. It was mentioned that Anne Arundel County has that requirement. Mr. Ward Bucher suggested giving stewardship awards, and Mrs. Kacher suggested bringing in the media by getting the press involved. It was discussed that TCHPC should use the annual CLG report to list all the Commission has done in the past year. Mrs. Kacher said other suggestions discussed at the workshop were arranging meetings with realtors, partnering with other historic commissions and organizations, and offering tax credits. She said everyone at the workshop agreed that offering tax credits to owners of historic properties is the most valuable strategy. Various MHT tax credit programs that are available were discussed at the seminar. Mrs. Kacher said Calvert County has 90 properties on their historic overlay list and she asked the commissioner from that county how they got so many. The reply was “Tax Credits!”

The commissioners then discussed the potential benefits of tax credits for both the owners and the district.

Mrs. Kacher said it was also suggested that each commission should have its own customized set of guidelines. Mr. Martin Sokolich advised that regarding the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission suggested TCHPC attend the meeting on Wednesday, 6 August. He said he will send an email to the commissioners to remind them of the meeting and provide the time and meeting details.

- C. HISTORIC PROPERTY SURVEY UPDATE – Mr. Ward Bucher mentioned that at the last meeting Mrs. Dorothy Fenwick suggested churches for the focus of the historic property survey. It was agreed that churches would be an ideal subject for the survey. Mr. Bucher said the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) uses a standard survey form, but felt that the form for this survey need not be that detailed. He outlined what needs to be done to begin the work: 1. Identify every historic church in the County, and 2. Develop an inventory form for them. It was discussed that the survey should include churches that are in incorporated towns, as well as those in the unincorporated parts of the County since the citizens in the towns also pay County taxes. A question was posed regarding the possibility of hiring a professional researcher. Mr. Ron Mitchell asked if historic graveyards should also be included in the survey, since most are associated with churches. All of the commissioners agreed that they should be included. Mr. Bucher added that cultural landscape should also be included. He said he will be meeting with Elizabeth Beckley in the near future, and will inquire about sources for matching funds. He said once the survey is completed the information will be available on the TCHPC website for all interested parties.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- A. SITE VISITS – Mr. Robert Amdur said he has been attempting to contact the owner of Knox (T-172), but has been unsuccessful so far. Meanwhile, he is in the process of arranging a site visit to Clays Hope (T-189) in Royal Oak. He will advise the commissioners by email once the arrangements have been confirmed.

Mrs. Dorothy Fenwick said she drove by Jena (T-163) recently and noticed work being done. Mr. Ward Bucher said the property owner has not yet submitted the requested details and updated work application, and as such has not received TCHPC approval for the proposed work. He asked Mr. Martin Sokolich if he can arrange for an inspector to visit the property to determine if any work requiring a building permit is being done.

- B. VOLUNTEER TO SCHEDULE SITE VISITS – Mr. Ward Bucher said Mr. Robert Amdur has expressed his desire to resign from TCHPC, leaving the task of arranging and scheduling the site visits to inspect the HDO properties open for someone else to do. Mr. Bucher asked if anyone wants to volunteer to handle that task. Two of the commissioners replied negatively. Mrs. Marsha Kacher said she could do it for a while if the other commissioners would agree to share that responsibility on a rotation basis. Since no one seemed eager to agree to that, Mr. Robert Amdur generously offered to remain on the Commission and continue to arrange the site visits until someone else is

able to assume that responsibility. The Commissioners expressed their appreciation for his commitment.

- C. NEED FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE TCHPC ENFORCEMENT – Mr. Ward Bucher said the County Code is deficient in dealing with enforcement of the rules for maintaining the historic fabric and integrity of the County's historic structures, and added that this has been a topic of discussion that has frequently occurred in TCHPC meetings for a number of years. Mr. Ron Mitchell agreed that lack of enforcement measures leaves the Commission helpless to act when demolition or alteration of buildings of significant historic value are proposed, and even worse, when property owners of HDO properties fail to consult TCHPC before making changes. It was discussed that a preliminary draft of a demolition delay ordinance was prepared by TCHPC several years ago and sent to the County Council for comment. However, the County Council was not in favor of adding the legislation to the County Code at that time. It was mentioned that many other counties in Maryland have demolition delay ordinances. Mrs. Dorothy Fenwick asked how the Commission can get more authority to prevent unauthorized changes to historic properties. It was discussed that perhaps the Commissioners should have an informal discussion with the County Council regarding this problem, and ask what solutions they might find agreeable. Mr. Ward Bucher asked the Commissioners to think about this topic and continue this discussion at next month's meeting.

IV. OPEN FLOOR

- A. WYE PLANTATION – Mr. Martin Sokolich distributed a notice for National Historic Designation of Wye Plantation. He also distributed the latest Maryland Endangered Property list.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be on Monday, 4 August 2014, at 3:00 pm in Conference Room One of the Talbot County Office Building at 215 Bay Street in Easton.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 4:20 pm.

23 July 2014